

TITLE 14. ZONING AND PLANNING

CHAPTER 14-1900. SIGNS

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§ 14-1901. Definitions.

(1) In this Chapter the following definitions apply:

(a) *Sign*. Any structure or device, whether or not attached to a building, which is primarily calculated to advertise and communicate, including ground signs, illuminated signs, projecting signs, swinging signs, temporary signs, and wall signs, but excluding:

(.1) advertising matter displayed on vehicles, pedestrians, or newsstands;

(.2) information required by law or ordinance to be placed on structures;

(.3) notice to the public that a property is for sale or for rent, except as provided in § [14-1902\(4\)](#);

(.4) excluding any such sign placed on the front of any building giving in unilluminated words and/or numerals the name and brief description of the nature of the business or businesses transacted.

(b) *Ground Sign*. Any sign supported by uprights or braces which is placed on or at ground level and not attached to any building.

(c) *Illuminated Sign*. Any sign which has characters, letters, figures, designs, or outlines illuminated by artificial lighting, including neon and interior light signs.

(d) *Project*. Extend beyond the building line over, on, or into any street.

(e) *Projecting Sign*. Any sign attached to a building or other structure which projects in such manner that both sides thereof are visible.

(f) *Swinging Sign*. Any projecting sign, other than a temporary sign, which is not rigidly attached to any building or structure or fixture thereon, which is intended to be capable of free movement or oscillation.

(g) *Temporary Sign*. Any sign which is constructed of cloth, cardboard, or any materials other than glass, wood or metal intended to be displayed for a short period of time only, including banners, pennants, advertising flags, and poster placards, but excluding political banners and banners informing the public of money-raising campaigns for charitable purposes.

(h) *Wall Sign*. Any flat sign which is placed against a building or other structure and attached thereto in such manner that only one side is visible.

§ 14-1902. Signs Extending Beyond the Building Line.

(1) No sign shall be erected or maintained beyond the building line over, on, or in any of the streets of the City except in conformity with the provisions of this Section. Any sign which does not so conform

is hereby declared a public nuisance.

(2) *Prohibited Areas.* [598](#) No person shall erect or maintain any sign extending beyond the building line:

(a) on City Hall, or any street immediately bounding City Hall, and on either side of Broad Street from Arch Street to Chestnut Street; [599](#)

(b) on any street immediately bounding Logan Square;

(c) on any tree guard, or support thereof, or on any utility pole on any street. [600](#)

(3) *Real Estate Signs.* No person shall erect or maintain any projecting sign which denotes any property as vacant, for sale, for rent, or otherwise available for disposition on Market, Chestnut, Walnut, Locust, Spruce, and Pine Streets, between the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers.

(4) *Maximum Projection.* [601](#) No sign erected or maintained on:

(a) Market Street, between the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers shall project:

(.1) more than 12 inches except that any occupant of any building, or part thereof, may maintain or erect one illuminated sign projecting 5 feet if the sign is of neon or interior light type only, all of the sign is at least 14 feet above the sidewalk, and the sign does not exceed 150 square feet of surface area; except further, that any commercial establishment which occupies not less than 100 front feet of a City block may erect one illuminated sign projecting not more than 9 feet from the building if the sign is of neon or interior light type only, all of the sign is at least 60 feet above the sidewalk, the sign does not exceed 100 feet in height, nor 600 square feet, and the prior written approval of the Department of Licenses and Inspections and the Art Commission is obtained.

(b) Chestnut Street between the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers shall project more than 18 inches.

(c) either side of Germantown Avenue from the 4100 block of Germantown Avenue to Northwestern Avenue shall project more than 12 inches. This requirement shall not apply to existing signs. [602](#)

(5) No sign erected or maintained anywhere else in the City shall project:

(a) more than 6 inches when the lowest part thereof is less than 7 feet above the sidewalk;

(b) more than 2 feet when such part of the sign is between 7 feet and 10 feet above the sidewalk;

(c) more than two-thirds the width of the sidewalk over which such sign projects to a maximum of 10 feet, when such part of the sign is more than 10 feet above the sidewalk.

(6) *Maximum Area.*

(a) Subject to the provisions of § [14-1902](#)(6)(b), [603](#) no projecting sign shall be erected or maintained which contains a total gross area of more than 800 square feet.

(b) No swinging sign shall be erected or maintained which contains a total gross area of more than 50 square feet, 25 square feet on each face.

(c) No temporary sign shall be erected or maintained which contains a total gross area of more than 150 square feet, 75 square feet on each side.

(d) The total area fronting on any one street of any single building or structure in which any wall sign or signs may be erected or maintained shall not exceed 800 square feet, except that if such building or structure has a frontage on any one street in excess of 50 feet and/or exceeds 50 feet in height, the total area may exceed 800 square feet by 17 square feet for each foot of frontage in excess of 50 feet and/or each foot of height in excess of 50 feet.

(e) Any person owning, operating or maintaining any building or structure so situated shall comply with the requirements of § [14-1902](#)(8)(d) and shall insure the compliance of his tenants with such requirements by lease or otherwise.

§ 14-1903. Permits for Signs Extending Beyond the Building Line.

(1) No person shall erect or maintain any sign unless he has obtained a permit from the Department of Licenses and Inspections.

(2) No permit to erect or maintain any sign shall be granted unless such sign and the person seeking to erect or maintain it:

(a) complies with the requirements of this Section and the regulations issued under it;

(b) complies with all applicable provisions of Chapters [14-100](#) to [14-1800](#);

(c) complies with all applicable regulations of the Fairmount Park Commission.

(3) Subject to the provisions of §§ [14-1902](#)(2) and [14-1903](#)(1) and (2) a permit shall be granted for the continued maintenance of any sign lawfully in existence on March 28, 1946, without compliance being required with any of the other provisions of this Chapter. [604](#)

(4) Any sign lawfully in existence on March 28, 1946, shall not be repaired altered, or moved in any substantial manner unless it be made to comply with all requirements of this Chapter and of regulations issued under it. [605](#)

§ 14-1904. Signs Within the Building Line.

(1) No sign shall be erected or maintained within the building line anywhere in the City except in conformity with the applicable provisions of Chapters [14-100](#) to [14-1800](#).

(2) In addition to the requirements of § [14-1903](#)(1) no sign shall be erected or maintained within the building line in or abutting on any of the locations in the City hereinafter specified except in conformity with the provisions of this Section.

(3) Any sign which does not conform to the requirements of § [14-1904](#)(1) and (2) is hereby declared a public nuisance.

§ 14-1905. Administrative Provisions.

(1) *Abatement.*

(a) Except as provided in § [14-1905](#)(1)(c) whenever any sign is erected or maintained in violation of the provisions of this Chapter or of the regulations promulgated under it the Department of Licenses and Inspections shall serve a written notice of such violations upon the violator, directing compliance within 30 days of receipt of the notice of violation. [606](#)

(b) After the expiration of the time for compliance as stated on the notice of violation, if the violation has not been corrected and no appeal is pending, the Department of Licenses and Inspections may itself or by contract remove the offending sign or, if it may be done with less expense, bring it into compliance. In any event, the costs incurred by the Department shall be charged against the persons owning such offending sign and the Law Department may take such action for the collection of such costs, by lien or otherwise, as may now or hereafter be authorized by law. No permit for any similar sign at that place shall be granted until such costs have been paid. Where the sign has been removed,

the owner may reclaim, within 15 days of the removal, any materials salvaged by the Department, upon payment of the cost of removal incurred by the Department.

(c) If any violation of the provisions of this Chapter results in an immediate peril to persons or property, the Department of Licenses and Inspections may require immediate compliance. If such compliance is not forthcoming, the Department may without other notice, in addition to invoking any other sanction or remedial procedure provided.

(.1) itself or by contract correct the violation; the imposition and collection of the costs of such action and the recovery of salvage materials to be in accordance with § [14-1905](#)(1)(a).

(.2) apply with the approval of the Law Department to any Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia for relief by injunction or restraining order.

(2) Penalties.

(a) In addition to any other sanctions or remedial procedure provided, the penalty for violation of any of the provisions of this Chapter is a fine of not less than \$25. nor more than \$150. for each violation together with imprisonment not exceeding 30 days if the fine is not paid within 10 days. Continuous violation of the same provision shall be a separate violation for each day.

§ 14-1906. Regulations.

(1) The Department of Licenses and Inspections shall issue regulations governing the erection and maintenance of signs. Such regulations shall be designed to ensure that all signs are:

- (a) structurally safe;
- (b) free from fire hazard;
- (c) securely erected and properly maintained;
- (d) otherwise consistent with public safety, health and welfare.

Notes

[597](#) Source: 1920 Ordinances, p. 253; amended, 1930 Ordinances, p. 693; amended, 1936 Ordinances, p. 96; amended, 1946 Ordinances, p. 250. Cross ref.: § 9-602.

[598](#) Cross ref.: Chapter 14-2000.

[599](#) Source: 1901 Ordinances, p. 54.

[600](#) Source: 1913 Ordinances, p. 180.

[601](#) Amended, December 30, 1958.

[602](#) Added, 1974 Ordinances, p. 173.

[603](#) Prior versions of the Code read "§ 14-1902(8)(b)" in an apparent error in enrolled bill. Corrected in 2003 by Code editor.

[604](#) Amended and renumbered, former subsections (3) and (4) deleted, Bill No. 000350 (approved August 11, 2000), effective July 1, 2000.

[605](#) Renumbered, Bill No. 000350 (approved August 11, 2000), effective July 1, 2000.

[606](#) Amended, 1964 Ordinances, p. 408.